



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

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CHILD CARE PROVIDERS HELP KEEP KIDS SAFE FROM FLU *NEW LAW REQUIRES PARENTS BE INFORMED ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Department of Human Service is making sure child care providers across the state gear up for flu season. Licensed agencies are required to keep detailed health records on the children in their care and must report any cases of the flu to their local health department, but legislation passed in the most recent General Assembly session mandates they now must also inform parents about the benefits of the flu vaccine.

“This new law is an excellent way to help ensure our most vulnerable children are protected from this dangerous virus,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “If parents take steps to have their children immunized, they not only protect their own children, but also help keep everyone else around them healthy.”

The new law was sponsored by Nashville Representative Sherry Jones and Oak Ridge Senator Randy McNally. It requires DHS to work with child care agencies and the Department of Health in getting the word out to parents about protecting their children from influenza. Letters have been sent to providers across the state, and information is posted on the DHS website about influenza.

“Hundreds of children across the state are diagnosed with influenza each year,” said Tennessee Department of Health Commissioner Susan R. Cooper, MSN, RN. “Informing parents through their child’s daycare provider is an excellent way to reinforce the message that vaccination is the best protection against the flu.”

Each year in the U.S., an average of 20,000 children under the age of 5 are hospitalized because of influenza complications, and some children die. During the 2007-2008 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) received reports that 86 children died from complications of influenza. Children who are sick with influenza can easily spread the virus to other children and adults in their home or child care facility.

To protect the health of children, the CDC recommends that all pregnant women and children aged 6 months through 18 years be vaccinated against influenza every year. Because infants younger than 6 months are too young to be vaccinated, CDC and the Tennessee Department of Health strongly recommend that all household members and care givers of these young infants be vaccinated to help prevent them from being exposed to the virus.

The Department of Human Services licenses 3,400 child care agencies across the state. For more information on child care licensing, visit: http://state.tn.us/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.htm.

For more information on protecting yourself from flu, visit the Centers for Disease Control website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/parents/>

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